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**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) An optical fiber including a core region and cladding regions of not less than three layers which surround said core region in order, wherein:

~~the optical fiber is a single-mode optical fiber;~~

each of said cladding regions has a mean refractive index different from those of the adjacent regions, at least one of said cladding regions has a lower mean refractive index than both adjacent cladding regions;

at least one cladding region is provided with a plurality of sub medium regions each having a refractive index lower than a main medium constituting this cladding region;

wherein said core region is constituted by a substantially homogeneous medium and said cladding regions are constituted by an inner cladding region of not less than two layers made of a substantially homogeneous medium and an outer cladding region surrounding said inner cladding region is provided with said sub medium regions; and

the ratio of the optical power which propagates through said sub mediums of said outer cladding region to the total optical power propagating through said optical fiber is set to not more than 1%;

said outer cladding region is surrounded by a jacket region constituted by a substantially homogeneous medium; and

the ratio of the optical power propagating through said jacket region to the total optical power propagating through said optical fiber is set to not more than 10<sup>-6</sup>.

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3. (Previously Presented) An optical fiber according to claim 2, wherein said inner cladding region has a two-layer structure consisting of a first inner cladding region and a second inner cladding region and a following relationship holds among respective refractive indices  $n_0$ ,  $n_1$ ,  $n_2$  of said core region, said first inner cladding region, said second inner cladding region and a mean refractive index  $n_3$  of said outer cladding region:

$$n_0 > n_2 > n_1 \text{ and } n_2 > n_3.$$

4. (Original) An optical fiber according to claim 3, wherein said sub medium regions in said outer cladding region are arranged as having a four-fold rotational symmetry.

5. (Original) An optical fiber according to claim 3, wherein said main medium of said outer cladding region is made of silica and said sub mediums are gaseous or vacuum.

6. (Original) An optical fiber according to claim 5, wherein the relative mean refractive index difference of said core region to said outer cladding region is set to not less than 2%.

7. (Original) An optical fiber according to claim 5, wherein the relative mean refractive index difference of said first inner cladding region to said second inner cladding region is set to not more than -0.1%.

8. (Cancelled)

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9. (Previously Presented) An optical fiber according to claim 3, wherein said optical fiber is operated in a single mode at a given wavelength between 1510nm to 1590nm.

10. (Previously Presented) An optical fiber according to claim 3, wherein the chromatic dispersion at a given wavelength between 1510nm and 1590 nm is set to a value below -80 ps/nm/km.

11. (Original) An optical transmission path including said optical fiber according to claim 10 and an optical fiber having a positive chromatic dispersion at said given wavelength.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Cancelled)